Radio tips

When the call comes

Ask for details
• What program is it for?
• Do they want an interview or a quick ‘grab’ for news?
• Will it be pre-recorded or live to air?
• Will it be over the phone or do you need to come to the studio?
• What will the angle of the story/line of questioning be?
• What is their deadline?

Brief yourself as well as possible
• Play for time if you can and if you need to – say you’ll ring back and spend a little time thinking about how you will express the ideas you want to get across – simple is best
• Do some quick research about the program you are being interviewed for, their style and their audience
• If you’re being asked to comment on an issue currently in the news, do an online news search to find out what else has been said on the topic

Fit your message to the medium
• If a grab is all they want, think of a snappy way to sum up your message
• For a longer interview, remember radio is an intimate medium – it should come across as a personal conversation between you and the interviewer

Once you’re on air
• Think friendly and authoritative
• Remember the audience and tell them what it means for them – their health, their family, their future – science needs to be put in context. Imagine you are explaining it to someone at a cocktail party
• Keep answers reasonably concise – don’t be afraid of silence when you feel you’ve said your piece
• Say what you do know and leave it at that – hedging and qualifying academic style makes boring radio
Once you’re on air

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• Forget your peers – thinking of what they might be thinking will inhibit you and make you lapse into ‘scientific speak’

• Use everyday language not jargon – remember you’re explaining to someone who may know nothing about your topic. A simple explanation of a difficult concept is gold to the media

• Have some examples ready – radio loves a story

• If you’re being interviewed by phone and you’re in a remote or interesting location, describe it. With radio you must be the audience’s eyes.

• Let your energy and passion for your subject show – a lively voice is what radio wants. Never read or memorise

• Smile – it will make your voice much more engaging to the listener and will help kill nerves

• Be honest – if you don’t know the answer, say so

• Enjoy yourself

After it’s all over

• Avoid the natural tendency to cringe and think of all the things you forgot to say

• Remember what went well

• Ask for feedback from the interviewer/friends/colleagues

• Listen back – and you’ll be even better next time